

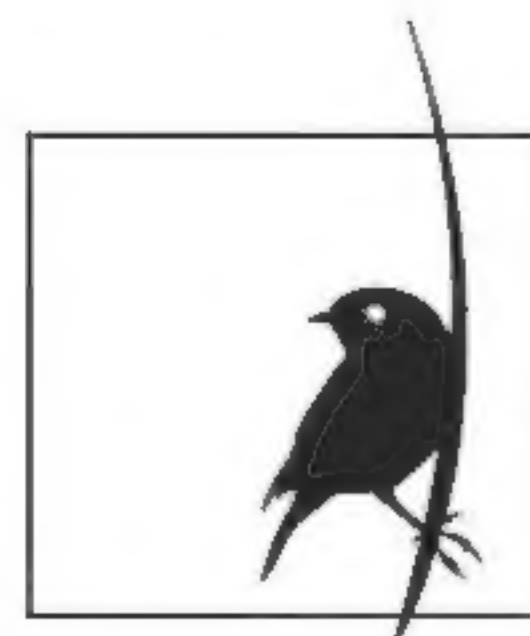
THE MOTORCYCLE INDUSTRY IN NEW YORK STATE

Second Edition

A Concise Encyclopedia of
Inventors, Builders, and Manufacturers

GEOFFREY N. STEIN

Revised and with a Foreword by
BRAD L. UTTER



EXCELSIOR
EDITIONS

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Militaire Autocycle Company of America Inc.

Buffalo

1915–16

Trade Name: **Militaire Autocycle**

Militaire Motor Vehicle Company of America

Buffalo

1916–17

Trade Name: **Militaire-Car**

Militor Corporation

New York City (offices; factory in

Elizabeth, New Jersey)

1917–20

Trade Name: **Militor**

Sinclair Motors Corporation

New York City (offices; factories in Springfield,

Massachusetts, and Bridgeport, Connecticut)

1920–23?

Trade Name: **Militor**

Sinclair Militor Corporation

New York City (offices; factory in Bridgeport,

Connecticut?)

1923

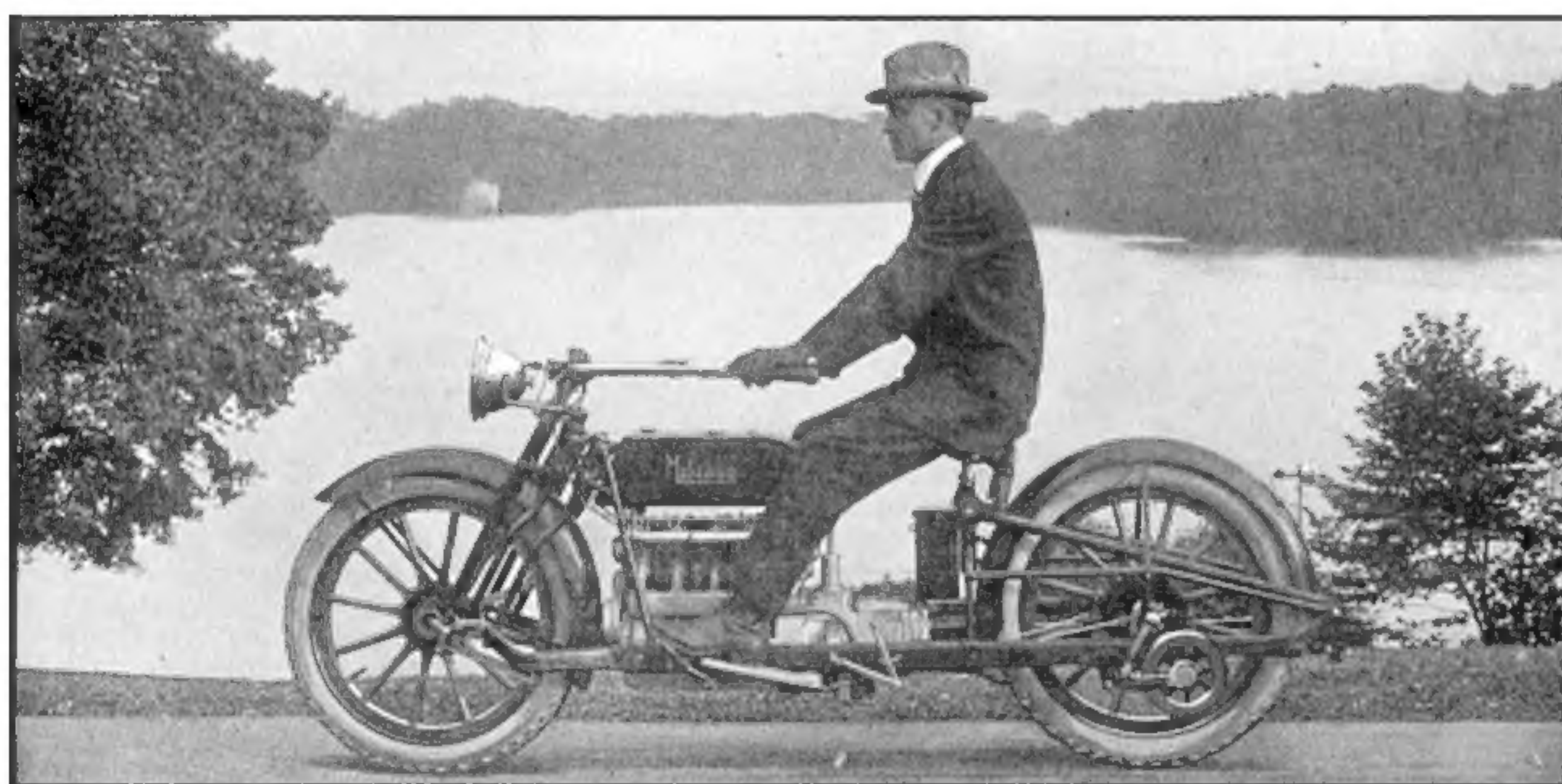
Trade Name: **Militor**

William G. Moore was credited with the invention of a “two-wheeled auto,” which reached the market in 1910. Moore claimed he was combining the “convenience,

safety and luxury of a four-wheeler, the economy of the motorcycle, and the flexibility and ease of control of a bicycle" (*Motorcycle Illustrated*, June 1, 1910). The means was a one- or two-cylinder, water-cooled engine driving the rear wheel of a low motorcycle through a two-speed transmission. Wooden artillery wheels were fitted—the front guided by a steering wheel. Two idler wheels offered support for the vehicle at low speeds or at rest. A wide, upholstered seat together with a footboard offered comfort beyond that of an ordinary motorcycle. Production of the 260-pound, \$300 or \$350 machine was by the De Luxe Motor Car Company of Cleveland, Ohio.

By March 1911, the Militaire Auto Company of Cleveland was manufacturing the "De Luxe Two Wheeled Auto." For 1912, the aluminum body was gone, as was the upholstered seat, replaced by a bucket on long, cantilevered sprung arms. The low frame, wooden wheels, idlers, and steering wheel remained.

In the spring of 1913, the Militaire company "first began to feel the pinch" of financial crises in Cleveland, and by July 1 a receiver was appointed. Liabilities of \$15,000 to \$20,000 far outweighed assets, according to the *Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*.



Militaire publicity photo taken overlooking Delaware Park Lake in Buffalo. From *Motorcycling*, December 13, 1915.

The successor, American Militaire Cycle Company, was incorporated in Cleveland in the spring of 1914 with a capitalization of \$100,000, although less than a year later the "patent rights" covering the idler wheels, kick-starter, front fork, and cantilevered seat supposedly were acquired by a "new syndicate" headed by John Richter. Meanwhile, in St. Louis, the Champion Motor Car Company introduced its three-hundred-dollar Champion with four-cylinder engine, two-speed gear-

ing, shaft drive, wooden wheels, and low tubular frame with idler wheels. Steering was by handlebar. *Motorcycling* reported that the Champion machine was the "Militaire motorcycle with many improvements" being manufactured under the "sole license" for the United States from the American Militaire Cycle Company.

In the summer of 1915, a new company, "backed by substantial and leading capitalists of . . . [Buffalo] . . . and Toronto, Ont.," was organized in Buffalo to manufacture and sell the Militaire (*Motorcycling and Bicycling*, August 30, 1915). Ten thousand dollars of the \$250,000 capitalization was paid in, according to the certificate of incorporation filed on August 30. The president of the new concern was Neil R. Sinclair, former assistant manager of the Traders Bank of Canada. Other investors included

Harry T. Ramsdell, vice president and cashier of the Manufacturers and Traders National Bank of Buffalo (Ramsdell was elected president of the bank in October);

Robert W. Pomeroy, director of the Erie Railroad, of the People's Bank of Buffalo, and of Buffalo Mines and trustee of Fidelity Trust Company of Buffalo; Edwin (Edward) McM. Mills, attorney for the Manufacturers and Traders Bank, director of the Houck Manufacturing Company, and director of Buffalo Copper and Brass Rolling Mills;

Carlton M. Smith, vice president of the Bank of Buffalo and president of Smith, Fassett and Company (another source says vice president of the People's Bank of Buffalo);

George C. Miller, director of Buffalo Mines (another report says vice president of Fidelity Trust Company);

William A. Morgan, president of Buffalo Copper and Brass;

Ward A. Wickwire, president of Wickwire Steel Company;

Edward W. Streeter of the Buffalo Express;

Gideon Grant, of Toronto, solicitor for the Royal Bank of Canada;

W. Frank Goforth, president of Ladies' Wear Ltd. of Toronto;

R. T. McLean, president of R. G. McLean Ltd. of Toronto; and

J. Robert Page, Elgie and Pate Ltd. of Toronto.

Officers included Miller as vice president, Mills as treasurer, and A. N. McLean, formerly associated with the Bank of Nova Scotia in Toronto, as secretary. *Motorcycling and Bicycling* thought, "Never before in the history of motorcycle production has such an eminent array of financial men placed their influence and means back of any motorcycle organization."

Building on the efforts of the Cleveland Militaire, which "died a-bornin for lack of responsible financial backing," and the St. Louis Champion, "which . . . failed when its backers found they couldn't do business on a shoestring," the Militaire Autocycle people buttressed their new company with the purchase for \$175,000 of rights and patents "to protect the public against buying an experiment when they buy the Militaire." In addition, "thousands of miles" of testing had proven the strength of the newest Militaire, noted *Motorcycling and Bicycling*.

W. (William?) F. Miller, identified as "formerly with the Maxwell Motor Car Company," was superintendent for the Militaire company. C. T. Schaefer, formerly of the St. Louis Car Company, was to be chief engineer. The Militaire offices were located in the Fidelity Bank Building in Buffalo, but soon the company purchased a 300-by-100-foot factory on Kensington and Clyde Avenues near the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad.

The Militaire was shown at the October New York and September Chicago trade shows, resulting in "a large number of orders." Sinclair hoped to start deliveries by the beginning of 1916, although since the company planned to assemble its motorcycle from parts purchased from outside suppliers it was dependent upon the timely receipt of those components.

The motorcycle that the Militaire company introduced for 1916 had a low, pressed, 2.5-inch channel steel frame. At the front was an artillery-style wooden wheel mounted on a pivoting axle supported by leaf springs. The design of the fork was patented—number 1,089,647—by David James Johnston of Toronto and assigned to the Militaire Auto Company of Cleveland in 1914.

Fitted to the frame was an 11-horsepower, 65-cubic-inch, L-head, four-cylinder engine. The crank was supported by three main bearings. Lubrication came from a gear-driven oil pump. Ignition was by Bosch magneto. A Schebler carburetor provided the fuel mixture. A step

20
MOTORCYCLING
and BICYCLING
December 13, 1915



Militaire Autocycle

A two-wheeled automobile

THE motorcyclist, accustomed to the general type of machine, will recognize in the "Militaire" Autocycle, innovations and mechanical refinements that have completely outclassed the "ordinary" motorcycle from every point of view.

While the "Militaire" Autocycle is not unlike the automobile, in many of its features of control it is purely and simply a motorcycle, and so fresh. It embodies many approved methods of control and is similar to the automobile in frame construction, transmission, unit power plant, choice of speeds, etc.

The "Militaire" Autocycle is absolutely vibrationless; its smooth-running, silent motor generates abundant power for every use—pleasure or commercial.

Do not construe that, because the "Militaire" Autocycle is new to you, it is in an experimental state of development. Model after model has been built and critically studied by the best mechanical engineers in the country. As it now stands, the Militaire is a perfect machine—perfect in every detail—nothing is incorporated that has not passed most exacting tests. The "Militaire" is now ready for you to inspect, to ride, to buy—you can not know what real comfort, real pleasure and real reliability in motorcycling means until you have ridden the "Militaire."

Write us direct for a descriptive circular.

Notable Features

Four cylinder unit power plant.
11½ H. P., 8 A. E. rating.
Selective sliding gear transmission,
3 speeds and reverse, standard ball
bearings. Dry plate clutch.
Shaft drive with two universals.
Artillery wheels mounted on annular
ball bearings.
Patented engine starter.
Pivoted front axle (patented).
Pressed channel steel frame.
Cantilever springs.
Wheelbase 65", Tire 28x8".
Patented Idler Wheels.
Highest grade equipment, including
Bosch Generator.
40 to 60 miles per gallon of gasoline.
Tire expense ¼ that of lightest cars.

Militaire Autocycle Co. of America, Buffalo, N. Y.

The financial and permanent stability of the "Militaire" Autocycle Co. of America, Inc., is important to both rider and dealer.

The "Militaire" Autocycle is a perfected machine backed by the strongest group of men



that ever associated themselves with the manufacture of a two-wheel vehicle, comprising some of the wealthiest and most conservative business men and financiers in New York State as well as Canada.

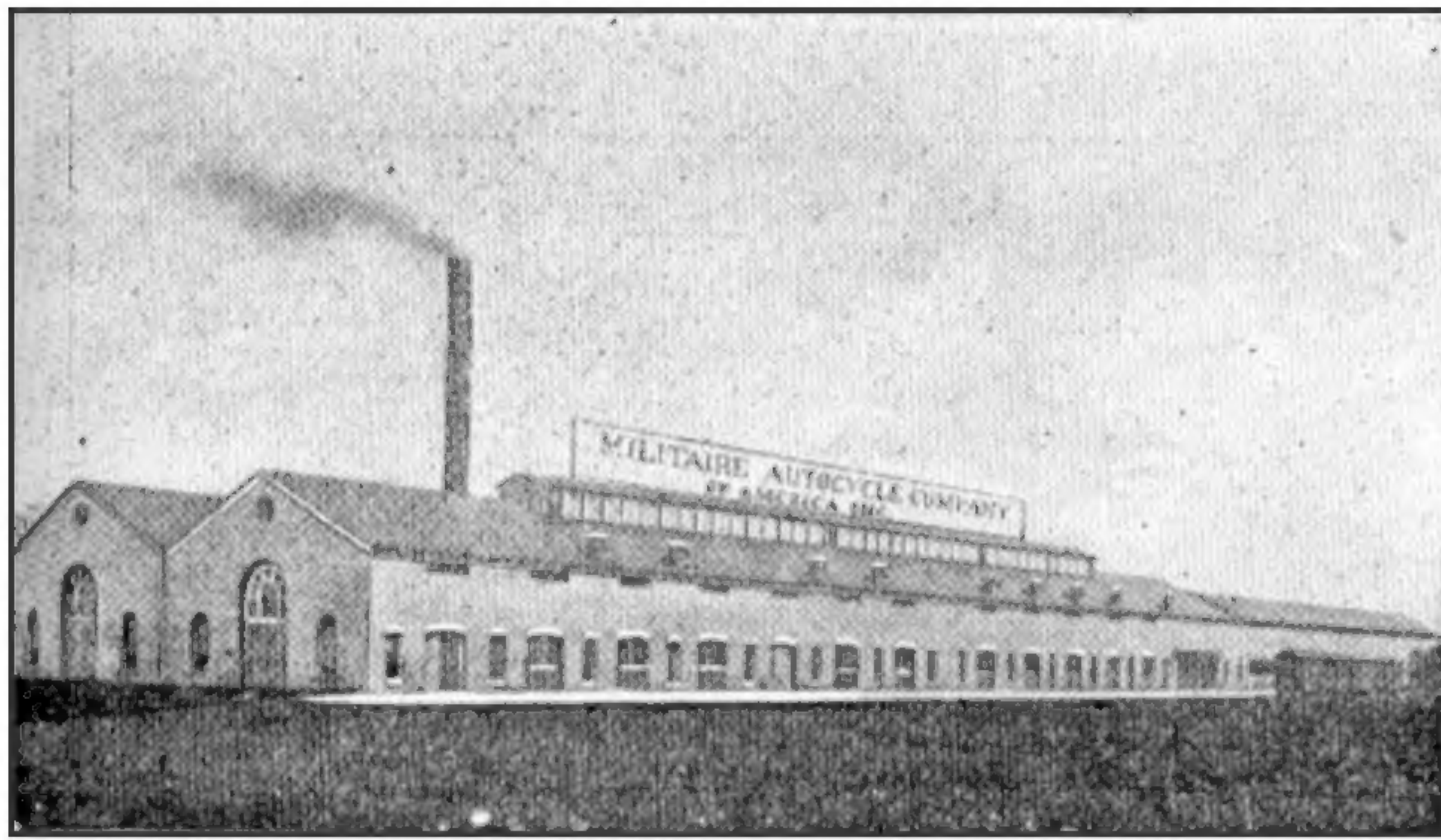
Ask Bradstreet's.

Say to your Dealer, "I want the goods that are advertised in MOTORCYCLING & BICYCLING."

Militaire Autocycle Company advertisement showing the "two-wheeled automobile" and the factory on Kensington Avenue. From *Motorcycling and Bicycling*, December 13, 1915.

starter had an automatic disengagement in case of a backfire. Behind the engine was a multiplate dry clutch operated by a foot pedal. The selective shift transmission had three speeds ahead and one in reverse. Drive to the rear wheel was by shaft. A double expanding and contracting 7-inch brake was fitted in the rear wheel.

Idler wheels were lowered or raised by a foot lever adjacent to the brake pedal on the left side of the machine; Johnston in 1913 had been awarded Canadian Patent 145,511, assigned to the Canadian Militaire Auto Company Ltd. for the idler-wheel arrangement. The Militaire saddle was mounted on cantilevered arms fitted with coil springs at the rear of the frame. This arrangement also was a Johnston invention, for which he received United States Patent 1,088,028, assigned to the Militaire Auto Company in Cleveland, in 1914.



The Militaire factory on Kensington Avenue in Buffalo. From an advertisement in *Motorcycling*, December 13, 1915.

The Militaire came supplied with 28-by-3-inch tires, electric lighting, and a horn powered by a battery and generator, which one report said was to be an extra-cost option. A speedometer was standard. The Militaire weighed 382 pounds, distributed over a 65-inch wheelbase. The list price was \$335. By comparison, a Ford Model T roadster automobile for the 1916 model year listed at \$390.

A note in the trade press in October 1915 said that the Militaire Autocycle Company of Buffalo was going to establish an assembly plant in Canada to avoid an import duty. Whether any such Canadian factory was created is doubtful.

In November, Sinclair said that deliveries from the Buffalo factory were to begin at the end of January 1916. Meanwhile, he had three hundred dealer applications on file. Material and parts had been ordered for 2,025 motorcycles, of which fewer than five hundred were scheduled for export.

In January, the Militaire at the New York Auto Show at the Grand Central Palace was “the center of an admiring crowd at all times and the staff of attendants is kept busy explaining the functions of the idler wheels and other features.” Later in the month, Sinclair said, “We will be turning out Militaires not later than the second week of February . . . and production will reach an output of eight machines a day by March 1. The first machines completed will be distributed among our dealers for demonstration purposes. War orders will be served after the regular dealers” (*Motorcycle Illustrated*).

In February, the trade press noted that the Militaire Autocycle Company of America Inc. had applied in

the state supreme court for a name change to Militaire Motor Vehicle Company of America Inc. The reason for the change, according to the application, was that “the name desired tells more accurately the purposes and activities of the corporation as set forth in the incorporation papers.” Action of the supreme court in Buffalo granted the change effective June 1, 1916.

In June 1916, the Militaire Motor Vehicle Company said that a contractor for aluminum crankcases had failed to make deliveries and “finally confessed that because aluminum went up to 60 cents a pound they could not carry out the contract.” As a result, Militaire production had been “embarrassed and hindered.” In October, the Militaire Motor Vehicle Company claimed to have solved its material supply problem and was “planning optimistically for the 1917 season.” A “selling problem” also was solved, “the New York agency having made the requisition for the great portion of the 1917 output,” although arrangements were to be made to supply other agencies around the country with increased output “if necessary.”

A stockholders meeting on September 20, 1916, voted to increase the capital stock to \$650,000; the \$400,000 increase was to be preferred shares, and the outstanding \$250,000 was to become common stock. At that point, \$180,000 of the original capitalization had been paid in. The shareholders meeting also voted on a proposition to mortgage the real estate and factory for \$75,000, according to the Certificate of Increase and Classification of Stock.

The increase in capital did not help the Militaire Motor Vehicle Company. At the end of 1917, a post-bankruptcy reorganization of the enterprise saw the creation of the Militor Corporation, with capital of \$1,000,000 (although beginning business with \$500). Sinclair was president, and George W. Dunham, president of the Society of Automotive Engineers, served as vice president; Campbell Scott was vice president and general manager; and Robert L. Notman was secretary and treasurer. Among the directors were Edward Mills, the former secretary of the Militaire company, and Notman—both of Buffalo; the other directors all had New York City addresses. A factory was secured in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The motorcycle also was renamed “Militor.”

In November 1918, the Militor Corporation was reorganized, with an increase in capitalization to \$1,625,000.

At that point the sole stockholders were Sinclair, Mills, Dunham, and Clyde S. Thompson.

In April 1919, *Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated* reported that the Militor Corporation had taken over the Springfield, Massachusetts, factory of the Knox automobile company, where the Militor concern, then reportedly organized at \$2,500,000, would build its motorcycle as well as a "light passenger car," four-wheel-drive truck, and tractor designed for army use, "and all of the familiar Knox models." The Jersey City plant was to be retained as "a development department." At the end of 1919, H. A. Goddard, sales manager of the Militor Motors Corporation factory in Springfield, reported orders for four thousand Militor motorcycles at the Chicago vehicle show. In January 1920, the Militor Corporation, with "General Sales Offices" at 115 Broadway in New York, advertised three models of their shaft-drive machine: a solo version, a sidecar passenger type, and a sidecar delivery style. All were fitted with the three-speed forward and reverse transmission and a 68-cubic-inch, overhead-valve, four-cylinder engine (the lower crankcase of which was integral with the stamped steel chassis). Now, the front suspension utilized coil springs in the fork tubes. The cantilevered seat suspension had been replaced by quarter-elliptical leaf springs separating the rear axle from the frame. A generator was now standard, with the magneto an option. The price was \$450, with the idler wheels a \$25 extra. With a two-passenger sidecar, the price was \$575 FOB Springfield. By comparison, a Ford roadster was \$395.

In January 1920, the Militor Corporation, at a special meeting of the shareholders at its New York City office, reorganized again. The number of shares was increased from 40,000 to 56,000; the classifications (preferred and common) of the shares were changed; and the "stated capital" was reduced to \$850,000. At that point, Sinclair as president and George Nicol as secretary attested that the corporate debt amounted to \$50,000 in accounts payable; \$55,000 in notes payable; and \$8,000 in deposits on contracts. The next month, the Militor Corporation became Sinclair Motors Corporation. L. M. Bradley, a "veteran of the automotive industry," was appointed as advertising manager and immediately started "on an extensive advertising campaign." In February, at the Chicago vehicle show, Goddard announced to *Motorcycling and Bicycling*

appointments of four for a combined total of eighteen states as well as "8,000 machines have actually been sold and deliveries will start about April 15th." In March, a dealers meeting in Springfield brought an enthusiastic group from as far away as Italy and Norway to view the 1920 Militors. On hand were Goddard and Bradley as well as "Vice Presidents G. W. Dunham and R. L. Notman; J. M. Hollett, assistant to the president; N. S. Lincoln, purchasing agent; C. G. Minor, chief engineer, and J. A. Bennett, factory manager." In the spring, the company leased a 4,000-square-foot office space in the new Marlin-Rockwell Building at Forty-Sixth Street and Madison Avenue in Manhattan.

In the winter of 1922, the "stocks" of the Sinclair Motors Corporation were moved from Springfield to the facilities of the Bullard Machine Tool Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut, which had acquired the "rights and patents" to the Sinclair Militor motorcycle, according to *Motorcycling and Bicycling*. Parts for more than ten thousand machines were to be shipped, and production was to start about April 1. The same journal in another story said that the Sinclair Militor Corporation "continues as the selling organization," and while "the machine has never been extensively produced, we are now assured, however, that production on a large scale has been started and deliveries can be confidently expected early in April." Offices remained in New York City, where the Sinclair Molitor (*sic*) Corporation advertised in mid-March for "a few reliable dealers." Officers at this point included the president, Sinclair; the first vice president and sales director, Goddard; the second vice president and treasurer, E. R. Mulcock; and the secretary, F. G. McGuire. Sinclair, Goddard, Mulcock, McGuire, E. P. Bullard, and L. A. Van Patten were directors.

In March 1922, the Sinclair Militor Corporation, a Delaware corporation, received authority to do business in New York, the principal location being New York County. The service of process address was that of Samuel B. Howard and George V. Reilly at 65 Cedar Street; both were subscribers and shareholders in the incorporation of the Militor Corporation five years before. Goddard announced the first shipment of motorcycles from the factory on May 24. An extensive advertising campaign in the trade press took place during the summer, when the Sinclair Corporation noted the shipments of motorcycles numbered 151

through 160. But in the fall of 1922, Goddard left the Sinclair Militor offices at 347 Madison Avenue. *Motorcycling and Bicycling* hoped that the “motorcycle industry will not lose his activities permanently.”

In January 1923, *Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated* said the Sinclair Militor remained the only shaft-driven motorcycle manufactured in the United States. *Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated* in February 1923 said that the Sinclair Militor Company continued to build the Militor. But *Motorcycling* reported in December 1924 that the Sinclair Molitor “is not now being made, according to our latest information.” In June 1925, after the journal had reported that the Militaire and successor motorcycles had “not been made in a number of years,” Joseph Matt of Buffalo wrote that he could provide new parts for Militaire motorcycles, since he had “bought up several hundred dollars’ worth of these in 1918 and had a service shop on these at that time until the latter part of 1922.” Three years later, he had everything available “but the wheels or the frame, but [knew] where [he] could get them if needed.” The Sunbeam Motor and Cycle Company in Buffalo also said in 1925 that they could furnish new and used parts for “Militor, Militaire and Sinclair-Militor machines.” In November 1999, the New York State Department of State still had the Sinclair Militor Corporation on “active” status as a corporation, although the biennial statement was “Past due—undeliverable.”

Total production for all versions of the Militaire motorcycle has been estimated at no more than a few hundred. Several machines have survived, although probably none in public venues.